

Insecure Belongings: A Family of Ethnic Germans from the Former Soviet Union in Germany

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Abstract: This article takes a look at the transformation of constructions of belonging during the course of life, and how they are embedded in family and collective history. Based on a case study of three women belonging to one family, who as ethnic Germans migrated in the early 1990's from the Soviet Union to Germany, we were able to demonstrate how questions of belonging were initiated by the migration process and the attributes ascribed to them in their country of arrival. Different family members were seen to perform different strategies of biographical work. This was due to their unique autobiographical experience and their belonging to different historical generations. Thus, the grandmother's experience of deportation from the Volga Republic to Siberia during the course of the Second World War was reactivated during her emigration to Germany. This reconfirmed her construction of belonging as a Volga German. Whereas after migration her daughter in law conceptualizes her belonging as a question of membership of a religious we-group. Her granddaughter, however, before and after emigration successfully searched a connection of the sense of belonging to her family of origin and her peer groups, first in Soviet society which was influenced by the predominantly Russian culture, and later in German society.

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1. Introduction

Self-perception and the perception of others in combination with developments arising from biographical experiences are factors that contribute to a sense of belonging. As a result of such processes, constructions of belonging which occur at different levels can be called into question at certain biographical time points. As already formulated by Roswitha BRECKNER (2005, p.71), migration processes can undo those mechanisms that allow constructions of belonging to go unquestioned on a social, national, ethnic or religious level. Floya ANTHIAS (2003, p.21) also points out that, when migration occurs in the course of one's

lifetime, structural, cultural and personal changes take place on several levels. Under such circumstances, it is exceedingly difficult to maintain or create new constructions of affiliation. Such phenomena as described by BRECKNER and ANTHIAS can also be observed in the migration of ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union (for further discussion on constructions of affiliation see BRANDENHORST, GRÜN and also KUEVER in this issue). [1]

Similar to Helma LUTZ (2000) we support the idea that migration does not represent an "anomaly" in the human course of life which automatically results in psychological uprooting, but view it as an event that draws on internal resources. Although existing constructions of belonging are put into question, new biographical strategies are simultaneously generated which can result in positive feelings of belonging (LUTZ, 2000, p.39). [2]

This distinction is particularly notable in our research and the empirical studies conducted. Whereas one family member belonging to the generation of children¹ attempted to obtain a positive feeling of belonging through religious affiliation, her daughter (representing the generation of grandchildren) automatically gravitated towards members of society outside the family. For another family member (belonging to the generation of parents), however, the question of belonging had comparatively marginal significance in the course of this person's life. To the contrary, the question of belonging to a we-group² is overshadowed by the traumata experienced during exile and the attempt to block its memory. [3]

Before we turn to the interviews conducted with three women in one family as representatives of three different generations, we would like to begin with a closer look at the choice of representatives involved in the study. In addition, we will discuss the methods and analyses of the biographical-narrative interview introduced by Gabriele ROSENTHAL (2004). We will also discuss the three women's biographies and address the constructions of belonging which were biographically relevant. Factors that influenced these constructions were migration and processes of adaptation, which to some extent continue to take place up unto the present. To conclude, we will also present some general statements concerning the immigration of ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union to Germany that go beyond the three individual cases depicted in this study. [4]

2. Methodical Implications

The interviews with the biographers presented in this essay took place in 2006 and were conducted within the framework of a research course entitled "Biography and Ethnicity: Development and changes in the sense of socio-cultural belonging in migrant populations in the US and Germany" headed by Gabriele ROSENTHAL and Michaela KÖTTIG (see GRÜN, BRANDHORST, KUEVER and also ROSENTHAL in this issue). Our aim was to discover the

1 Here we allude to parental, child and grandchild generations of ethnic Germans according to ROSENTHAL and STEPHAN (2009/in press).

2 In this article the term "we-group" is used according to Norbert ELIAS. For detailed explanations see ELIAS (1987; ELIAS & SCOTSON, 1993, 1994).

scope of experience encountered by immigrants from the former Soviet Union. In the process, the study of family constellations emerged as an important starting point for further study. It became evident that immigration to Germany affected family cohesion, especially for those family members who could demonstrate their German origin. [5]

We would like to summarize this approach according to the following guidelines: The method of biographical-narrative interviews was introduced by Fritz SCHÜTZE (1976, 1983). At the beginning of such an interview, a narrative initial question is posed, which we phrased in the following manner: [6]

"Please tell us about your family and your life history. We are interested in everything that you consider important. You may take as much time as you like. We will take notes which we may return to later, if necessary." The interviewee then usually begins to narrate³. This is then followed by internal narrative inquiries (ROSENTHAL, 2003, p.918), in order to clarify points that remain vague, which are concluded by external narrative inquiries (ROSENTHAL, 2004, pp.50ff.). [7]

Using this technique, we conducted a biographical interview. The first interview was conducted by Jana BALLENTHIEN with Tamara Peters Jr. In addition, the mother of Tamara Peters Jr. was also interviewed, whose name is also Tamara. The interviewers were Jana BALLENTHIEN and Wilhelmine BERG. This interview was reconstructed within a *Lehrforschung* (training research project) in collaboration with Corinne BÜCHING (BALLENTHIEN, BÜCHING & BERG, 2007). Subsequently, Corinne BÜCHING and Wilhelmine BERG conducted an interview with Tamara Jr.'s paternal grandmother named Mathilda (BÜCHING, 2008)⁴. [8]

Below, we will introduce the three biographies presented in this study and discuss the results of the analysis in conjunction with the development and modification of constructions of belonging. [9]

3 About a biographical main narration and the healing effects of storytelling see ROSENTHAL (2003).

4 The material created by this procedure was evaluated by us on the basis of the "gestalt-theoretical-phenomenological concept of the dialectic interrelation between experience, memory and narration" (ROSENTHAL, 2004, p.49) by ROSENTHAL and the method of the biographical case reconstruction developed by her (ROSENTHAL, 2005a, p.173, 2004, pp.53ff.). Two theses and one unpublished research paper resulted from the analysis of the three interviews (BALLENTHIEN, 2008; BÜCHING, 2008; BALLENTHIEN et al., 2007). Shortly after the end of the research project, and partly at the same time as the analyses of the interviews, a triennial project of the German Research Foundation (DFG) entitled "Ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union in Germany" began (<http://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/70730.html>). A pilot study was sponsored from 2005 to 2006 by the Evangelical Church in Germany. The project is directed by Gabriele ROSENTHAL and researchers include Irina FEFLER, Viola STEPHAN and Niklas RADENBACH (ROSENTHAL & STEPHAN, 2009/in press; FEFLER & RADENBACH, 2009/in press). This study concerns multi-generational research of ethnic Germans and takes into consideration the generation of grandchildren. Our theses as well as the conclusions drawn from the three individual cases highly benefited from the empirical results of the project and vice versa.

3. Case Studies

In the German majority society the ethnic Germans are perceived as a highly homogeneous group. In addition, legal statutes clearly define the type of family history a person must have in order to qualify as an ethnic German by law (BVFG [Federal Expellee Law] §6)⁵. The historian Irina MUKHINA (2007) explains that in reality, a homogenized image of German ethnicity does not exist. Ethnic Germans never represented a coherent group with a common national consciousness, and the term "Russian Germans," as a term unifying various Germanic groups, did not exist in pre-revolutionary history with respect to German settlers and colonists in Russia and the other former states of the Soviet Union (MUKHINA, 2007, p.7). In order to further describe the different courses of family history pursued by the women interviewed, we will also incorporate certain details concerning the socio-historical context in which they lived, and begin with a few introductory statements. [10]

3.1 Mathilda—Biographical work through deportation and migration

The settlement of Germans in the former Soviet Union can be traced back to Catherine the Great, a Prussian princess called the *tsarina*, who issued the invitation manifesto to all Germans in 1763 (CRONIN, 2006). As a result, numerous German farmers and handicraftsmen came to Russia and founded the Volga colonies alongside many other settlement areas (BOURRET, 1990, p.143; MUKHINA, 2007, p.8). By the end of the eighteenth century, several German localities existed in Kazakhstan and the Siberian part of the former Soviet Union (KLÖTZEL, 1998, p.27). The settlers were given land and granted numerous privileges (INGENHORST, 1997, p.21; GRIESE, 2006, p.97). By the time of the First World War, the German population in the former Soviet Union amounted to a total of 2.4 million (FLEISCHHAUER, 1990, p.157). Twenty-two percent of them lived in the Volga Region alone (GRIESE, 2006, p.106). [11]

The distance between the settlements of the ethnic Germans in the Soviet Union amounted to several thousand kilometers, so that as a group, they did not remain in close contact. They not only differed according to the diverse geographic locations in which they settled in the Soviet Union, but also with respect to their origins in Germany and the differing regional provenances from which they emigrated, as well as their religious affiliation (MUKHINA, 2007, pp.7ff.). [12]

When Stalin came to power, the dekulakisation⁶ in 1928 and in the following years, the attack on the Soviet Union by the German *Wehrmacht* on April 22nd, 1941, in combination with ensuing developments of the Second World War resulted in the loss of privileges, persecutions, and the deportation of ethnic

5 According to the BVFG (Federal Expellee Law), ethnic Germans have to prove German ethnicity in terms of family history, which, besides German origin, includes the German language, education and living culture.

6 In 1928 Stalin enacted a coercive collectivization of the agriculture. In the following years large scale farmers and members of the wealthy middle class in the Volga Region and in the Ukraine were arrested as *Kulaks* and deported to Siberia and Kazakhstan (BOLL, 1992, p.18).

Germans from the western regions to the far eastern regions of the Soviet Union, in particular to Siberia and Kazakhstan. Stalin justified these forced resettlements as a necessity in order to counteract the dangers posed by ethnic German collaborators and the National Socialists (PINKUS & FLEISCHHAUER, 1987, pp.303ff.). Special settlements emerged following these resettlements (MUKHINA, 2007, pp.81ff.). Our study shows, that existing rural settlements had to take on an assigned number of deportees. Up until 1955, all ethnic Germans lived under the "*komandatura*" of the Soviet government and were then (partly) rehabilitated (BOLL, 1992, p.19). [13]

Mathilda, how we will call her, too, was affected by this historic development⁸. She was born in 1928 in the autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of the Volga Germans as the daughter of prosperous, Catholic, ethnic German parents. Mathilda describes her childhood years as almost paradisiacal, in spite of the displacement of her grandfathers in the course of the dekulakisation. In 1941, her family is deported to a Low German *kolkhoz* in Siberia as a result of the attack on the Soviet Union by the German *Wehrmacht*. Mathilda grew up in an all female household once her father was drafted into the *trud* army⁹ and her youngest brother died from diarrhea. Her primary education was carried out by her grandmother, while her mother and older siblings were delegated to forced labor in the *kolkhoz*. The deportation to Siberia and the loss of all male family members during the course of the Second World War were traumatic events in Mathilda's biography. She suffered from the death and displacement of her family members, experienced starvation, was subjected to heavy labor during the war, and lived in constant fear of being deported herself. She was uprooted from her home and the Volga German culture and language. She develops a strategy for dealing with these events in order to live with the past by successfully denying what has happened, which becomes her biographical work. She successfully denies the deportation and the traumatic experience of the war years and instead, to the present day, idealizes the pre-war years in the Volga republic. For her, the Volga republic is a symbol for homeland, education, family, property, German culture and language. Later analysis of the interview reveals that this narration was not only a momentary projection of emotion, but a permanent, fixed conception of herself as a Volga German. At no point in her life depictions did she deviate from this construction of belonging. [14]

This makes it easier for her to establish a life following the war in her place of exile. At the age of 21, during the *commandantur*, she marries a Volga German Catholic who returns from the *trud* army; a man who shares and reminds her of her past. Because a return to the Volga region is politically impossible, they remain in their place of exile in Siberia. In the years that followed, they had five

7 *Komandatura* (Russian): A well-functioning system of offices, which was created exclusively for the control of special settlers.

8 Names, dates, places etc. are changed.

9 *Trud* army: the term for the labor army into which many ethnic Germans, especially men, were drafted and sent away to various parts of Siberia, the Urals and the Far North to work on the railways, on road construction, in the coal mines and on timber felling. Many of them did not survive (MUKHINA, 2007, pp.69ff.; SHEEHY & NAHAYLO, 1972, p.19).

children together. Due to the traumatic years prior and Mathilda's successful efforts to deny her past, she depicts the years between the war and the subsequent emigration to Germany exclusively in terms of her children's educational careers. She disappears from her own biographical narrative and remains a narrator of her own children's biographies. She reports on the experiences of others and is herself a shapeless and static figure. Her own individual experience during her 50 years in Siberia could not be reconstructed. Presumably, she confined herself to functioning and focused solely on her children's educational careers, leaving the past unprocessed behind her. [15]

Mathilda does not begin to talk about herself until she talks about her emigration to Germany in the beginning of the 1990s in her main narration of the interview. Due to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the political transitions in Eastern Europe, Perestroika¹⁰ and Glasnost¹¹, and the collapse of the Soviet Union (DRUWE, 1991; BEISSINGER, 2002), the migration of ethnic Germans increased tremendously. The promise of future opportunity also motivates Mathilda's family members to migrate to Germany at this time. GRIESE (2006, p.148) relates how in the time period between 1989 and 1992, numerous villages lost nearly 80 percent of their inhabitants due to the emigration to Germany. Many of the departed had not even planned to migrate at that time, but decided to leave spontaneously due to the enormous wave of departures. Mathilda's situation was similar. The declarations of the former German chancellor Helmut Kohl and the former Russian president Boris Jelzin, who announced the "reestablishment of the Republic of Germans in the traditional settlement regions of their ancestors in the Volga," raised Mathilda's hopes to return to her home in the Volga region. However, the revision of the declaration led to the decision to migrate to Germany. Mathilda's presentation during the interview changes beginning with the event of the emigration. Her own life reemerges in the narrations. This also allowed us to reconstruct her experience during the migration (BÜCHING, 2008, pp.68ff.). [16]

We were able to establish in the case reconstructions that, on both the narrative level and based on her personal experience¹², significant parallels existed in Mathilda's life with respect to the time periods surrounding her deportation and emigration to Germany. In the following section, we will contrast the two events in order to further denote existing parallels. As mentioned above, numerous ethnic German settlements nearly disappeared at the beginning of the 1990s due to the migration to Germany. Similarly, in the 1930s, villages had also been severely reduced in number as a result of Stalinist cleansing and dekulakisation. In both cases, all that remained were abandoned buildings, farms and stock. With respect to Mathilda's own personal experience, these historical events also brought about the loss of important persons in her life: her grandfather in the course of

10 Perestroika (Russian) = reorganization and reformation in regard to society.

11 Glasnost (Russian) = openness and transparency in a political context.

12 About the distinction between narrated and living levels within the life story cf. ROSENTHAL (1995).

dekulakisation, and her husband shortly before the emigration. In sum, both events were characterized by personal loss and the demise of settlements. [17]

In the interview, she talks about the events in an interchangeable manner. In reference to the deportation, Mathilda relates:¹³ "They had all gone, all that remained were cats, dogs and the stock, not one German stayed" (I1/3/33-4/1) [see the [Appendix](#) for the transcription notation]. [18]

Referring to the exodus during the 1980/90s, she recounts: "The Germans had disappeared from Siberia, in a split second, all at once the one village was vacant, this one's gone, that one's gone"¹⁴ (I1/29/20-23). [19]

Because the surrounding circumstances strongly resemble one another and elicited strong emotions in Mathilda, she would have been in a similar psychological state of mind during the emigration and during the deportation. The migration would have served to reactivate memories of her experience during the deportation. More and more people disappeared as a result of state violence, which Mathilda formulates as follows: "there was no refuge for us anymore"¹⁵ (I1/29/25-26) and: "the violence caused people to flee from there again, and that's how it is, for us there was no future anymore"¹⁶ (I1/30/1-3). [20]

In sum, deportation and migration are events in Mathilda's life caused by state violence. She presents herself as a victim of politics and feels herself incapable of acting. Instead, she perceives herself as subjected to political authority. During the interview she articulates the same feelings when she talks about the situations shortly before emigration and deportation. When talking about deportation, her initial reaction is fear which is followed by an admission, that she does not know what to say about it. With the same words, she addresses the subject of her own emigration. [21]

Besides the entirely different conditions regarding the voluntariness of deciding to stay or to leave, the surfacing of her memories of deportation in the 1990s occur as a result of the similarities involved in preparing to emigrate. For instance, before departure and when leaving her home behind, substantial possessions of any kind have to be sold, given away or left behind. [22]

Eventually, after a succession of losses that resemble one another, Mathilda and her family members (her children and grandchildren) start their trip to Germany which takes place at the very same train station that represented the final destination for her and her family (her parents, grandmother and siblings)

13 In original language (German): "die haben alles weg alles alles rein da warn nur Katzen Hunde geblieben und das Vieh war zurückgeblieben nicht ein Deutscher ist da geblieben."

14 In original language (German): "die Deutschen sind da verschwunden in Sibirien, wie nichts, das war äh (1) das war mit einmal war das eine Dorf leer ja, mit einmal hieß es ach der [...] der ist weg der ist weg der ist weg."

15 In original language (German): "Da war kein Zuflucht für uns dort nicht mehr."

16 In original language (German): "das hat nochmal die Leute dort weggetrieben ja mit der Gewalt ja, und so (1) ist das, für uns war dort keine Zukunft mehr."

following deportation. She emphasizes the train's fittings, acknowledging that it was a "regular, lovely train with seats"¹⁷ (11/57/7-10). Although unaware of the detail, Mathilda compares the former train used during deportation with the train that takes her to the airport for her emigration to Germany. Further narrations reveal a reactivation of the negated experiences of deportation during her migration to Germany. The trip begins where the deportation ended in the past, and causes the return of memories once denied. [23]

According to TERR (1995), a return of memories once denied is often triggered by an emotional state which resembles that state in which the memory was originally made. Mathilda finds herself traveling through her past, as she begins her long journey to a foreign country. This condition is predestined to revive a negated memory which is underscored by the following citation: Mathilda and her family are boarding the train which is supposed to take them to the airport in Moscow. Because she finds the situation highly emotional, she takes a sedative and articulates the following:

"I didn't need the sedative, I didn't cry back then until they put us on the train, then it started, mama why are you crying, why are you all crying, now I can't hold it back, but back then I didn't cry, I felt sorry, I am just always scared, when we come to Moscow now and seat ourselves in the airplane, and then we finally drive, and then he says we have to go back"¹⁸ (11/61/8-14). [24]

It becomes apparent that she had not cried when saying goodbye, but her emotions rise to the surface when on the train. This citation brings to life how the repressed circumstances of her deportation in the past close in on her. Mathilda explains that she did not cry because she felt sorry to leave everything behind. Instead, she cried because the fear she felt back then returned. The memories that had been negated throughout the years had resurfaced. In the days following migration and once in Germany, Mathilda is confronted with her memories of deportation due to external circumstances and has to face up to them. She is not able to verbalize the traumatic experience, but the deportation incident resonates latently in numerous statements concerning her emigration to Germany. [25]

The family arrives in a major German city and travels from there by bus to Friedland¹⁹. There, they are assigned a room. The twelve family members are put

17 In original language (German): "normaler schöner Zug mit Plätzen."

18 In original language (German): "Beruhigungstablette das ich nicht gebraucht weine nicht ich hab nicht früher geweint bis man uns in den Zug rein gesetzt hat, dann gings los, na Mama worum weinst du jetzt warum weint ihr jetzt jetzt kann ichs nicht mehr halten aber ich hab da nicht geweint als wir da so was haben leid hat getan oder was ich hab ich hab nur immer Angst wenn wir uns jetzt nach Moskau komm setzen uns ins Flugzeug rein und dann fahren wir endlich und dann sagt er wir müssen zurück."

19 Friedland, a transit camp, was established in 1945 in order to guide through and provide first care for evacuees and refugees. Later on, besides returning war prisoners Friedland took in several different groups of refugees (e.g. refugees of the Hungarian revolt in 1958 or boat people from Vietnam). Since then, the camp is called "Tor zur Freiheit" (gate to freedom). At the present time it is the only first care facility for repatriates of German origin, who predominantly return from the successor states of the Soviet Union. From there they can be allocated to different Federal States. The transit camp provides 2,600 beds in order to take in 100,000 persons with an average duration of stay of seven days

together in a single room in a foreign country. She describes the situation as follows: "There we had a lovely big room and sheets and everything, and it was all like—how to say—really like being in paradise, food and drinks and everything"²⁰ (I1/58/2-4). Again the memory of deportation is suggested in a momentary thought she had when they arrived in Siberia after deportation and all found shelter in a room in a family's house. This moment was formulated as follows: "And then there was this apartment, ready for everyone, yes we had "stutjes," there were big and very small kitchens, that was something"²¹ (I1/8/2-4). [26]

At this point, the similarities between the text passages about migration and deportation abate at the narrative level. Although the situation at hand is virtually the same, the beauty she witnesses in Germany is heavily emphasized: a paradise. Germany represents an idealized vision of returning to the homeland which triggered the surfacing of memories. "Home" (the Volga Republic) had been left by means of deportation, whereas the "new home" (Germany) was sought after through emigration. It is striking that during the entire interview, Mathilda does not use the words "emigration" or "deportation" once, which is an indicator that these topics still pose difficulty for her. She is presently 80 years old but still lacks the emotional detachment to her own biography in order to talk about these events in terms of deportation and emigration. [27]

A central feature of this case study is that the emigration to Germany reactivated memories of the deportation and brought an end to the stoic years in Mathilda's biography in which she merely functioned and defined herself through others. After emigrating, Mathilda finds herself in a similar situation following the deportation, in which she has to become integrated into a new society and to reconcile this process with her past. The challenge then becomes establishing and sustaining a coherent structure and order to her own biography under entirely modified, everyday conditions. Once she reactivates her past memories through the process of recollection and working through her personal history, Mathilda follows her inner logic. She utilizes her personal resources and the mechanisms she has developed in order to apply them to her new life situation, hence is able to exist and to function within a modified society due to the utilization of her biographical coping processes. [28]

For the past 15 years Mathilda has lived in the household of one of her daughters in a major German city. Although Mathilda's new home in Germany can not replace the Volga Republic, it makes her feel happy and confident that her children are secure and have a future to look forward to. That is what matters to Mathilda. The importance of her ethnic belonging is secondary to her sense of belonging among her family members and in Germany, which she now accepts as her new home. [29]

(http://www.mi.niedersachsen.de/master/C35s26698_N3525820_L20_D0_I522.html).

20 In original language (German): "da hatten wir dann ein schönes großes Zimmer und Bettzeug und alles das war alles wie=soll=man=sage richtig wie im Paradies, Esse und Trinke und alles."

21 In original language (German): "und dann war dort diese Wohnung für jeden war schon fertig ja wir hatten stutjes das war dort unser großes und ganz kleine Küchen so ja, aber das war schon was ja."

"The history of societies can have a considerable impact on our biographies for several generations" (ROSENTHAL, 2000, p.135). We have shown how societal and historical circumstances constituted Mathilda's biography. Likewise, the biographies of Mathilda's daughter-in-law and her granddaughter are similarly characterized by their social history. The effect of this impact will be demonstrated in the biographies of her daughter-in-law, Tamara, and, more importantly, her granddaughter, Tamara Jr. [30]

3.2 Tamara—Dealing with uncertain ethnic belonging through religious affiliation

Tamara is Mathilda's daughter-in-law. She was born in 1959 in Siberia, in a region where Mathilda's family had been deported, and was the first daughter of a Russian-Orthodox mother of Russian origin and a Baptist father of German origin. Some of her ancestors had already lived in Siberia before the deportations of the Second World War and formed a part of the ethnic German communities who founded various settlements in Siberia starting at the end of the 18th century. These communities were relatively homogeneous with respect to religious denomination and their regional origins in Germany. These communities lost their homogeneity, however, as a result of the deportation of ethnic Germans (e.g. from the Volga region) into these areas, and heterogeneous village communities emerged (KLÖTZEL, 1998, p.27; MUKHINA, 2007, p.16). In succeeding generations, predominantly in the 1950s, the number of binational marriages increased. This reflected a stronger identification with the Soviet system and the denial and avoidance of the German we-group affiliation (ROSENTHAL, 2005a, p.324). This development probably also played a role in the marriage of Tamara's parents. [31]

During her childhood and adolescence, Tamara relocates frequently (from Siberia to the distant Black Sea and back), growing up partly with her parents who are integrated in the Soviet society, and spending long periods in the household of her German Baptist grandparents. Consequently, already at an early stage Tamara's biography is influenced by both the Russian and German cultures and throughout her life, she is provided the opportunity to grow up under German and Russian affiliations. [32]

Her paternal grandparents allow her to be a child, she experiences a feeling of security and comfort, and is spared from household duties and educational responsibilities which form part of the routine in her parents' household. Furthermore, her German grandparents convey the German language and culture as well as religion (Baptism) to her. However, her socialization within her parents' house is entirely different: during the interview, she expresses feelings of being overwhelmed with the demands placed on her with respect to domestic work and the upbringing of her siblings. Within her parents' household, Russian is the language spoken, and the Russian-Orthodox doctrine is observed. In the interview, the identification with her father, her paternal grandparents and their German origin becomes apparent, who she consistently refers to in a positive manner. Her comments with respect to the Russian part of her family and life in

her parents' household where Soviet values play a greater influence are strikingly more negative (e.g. bringing up issues that have negative connotations, like alcoholism, crime, and her feeling of being overburdened). This pattern is demonstrated at the start of the interview²². For instance, she comments on a situation within her parental household:

"I also remember when I had to take care of the younger brother, he was born in summer, he was lying on the bed and I had to watch him that he stays quiet, and he started to cry, and mother was busy in the barn, and all the sudden I felt so overBURDENED"²³ (11/3/24-28). [33]

A few lines later, she talks about the vacations she spent with her grandparents:

"I always felt at ease with my grandma, thus when on VACATION I always was with my grandma, and we celebrated the holidays such as Christmas and Easter [...] Grandma then, uh, I have to say she really spoiled us, she got us new clothes, or mostly sewed them"²⁴ (11/3/38-45). [34]

Furthermore, Tamara refers to her mother continuously as "Russian": "meine russische Mutter" (my Russian mother) (11/7/25 & 11/22/2). This attribute belongs to her mother persistently. On the other hand, she does not explicitly speak of her "German" father or her "German" grandparents. This suggests that her ethnicity as German was implicit, whereas her belonging to a Russian ethnicity needs mentioning, which probably relates to her present perspective. [35]

Following her schooling years, she begins her studies in a city not far away from her grandparents' residence. The orientation towards the German side of her family reveals itself during her studies, not only in terms of the vicinity to her grandparent's house, but also in reference to her selection in partnerships. While studying, Tamara has several short relationships with men of Russian origin. During the interview, this is emphasized by her as follows: "they were also Volga Germans (2), yes at some point that crossed my mind, yes, I don't know, because I have a Russian mother, uh, name of my father"²⁵ (11/7/23-26). After the completion of her studies, she returns to her grandparents' village, and at the age of 23, she marries a Volga German Catholic, Mathilda's youngest son. With him she has two daughters. By choosing partners of Volga German origin and marrying a Volga German husband, she secures her construction of belonging. In

22 On the basis of detailed text analysis, we can conclude that these statements are caused by present interest of presentation or the German origin of the interviewees.

23 In original language (German): "ich erinnere mich auch als ich auf den kleinen Bruder aufpassen sollte er ist im Sommer geboren, er lag auf dem Bett und ich musste sozusagen kucken, das er ruhig bleibt und er hat angefangen zu weinen und Mutter war im Stall beschäftigt und ich war plötzlich so überFORDERT."

24 In original language (German): "ich hab mich immer bei meiner Oma wohlgefühlt also wenn FERIEN waren war ich immer bei meiner Oma und wir haben dann auch Feiertage gefeiert solche wie Weihnachten und Ostern [...] Oma hat dann ä ich muss sagen sie hat uns ganz doll verwöhnt sie hat dann auch äh neue Kleider für uns besorgt oder meistens genäht."

25 In original language (German): "das waren auch so Russlanddeutsche (2) ja also irgendwann fiel mir das so ein, ja, keine Ahnung weil ich hab eine russische Mutter ä ä Name von Vater."

the same way, her choice of residence is evidence of her ethnic orientation. She chooses to live in her grandparents' village where she encountered a German upbringing during her childhood: "Well, in the village where I also worked and got married later, so to speak my roots were there (5) uh (2) now I lost my train of thought (8) uh (1) I lost my train of thought"²⁶ (I1/4/17-19). This citation indicates how difficult it is for Tamara to approach the issue of her origin. There are many citations of this kind that can be found within the interview text. They always follow a similar structure: Tamara introduces the issue of origin, but then interrupts abruptly or changes the subject. An analysis of this behavior suggests that such confused formulations reveal Tamara's unprocessed constructions of belonging, which prevent her from putting her thoughts into words. [36]

When Tamara married, she struggled with losing contact to her Russian socialized brothers, but for the most part, to the German part of her family. After marrying into her husband's Volga German Catholic family, Tamara finds herself in a family whose ethnic orientation is German within Soviet society, but the marriage encounters unpredictable difficulties and complexities. In particular, Tamara experiences her mother-in-law, Mathilda, as an intruder. For Mathilda, her new daughter-in-law does not meet her ideals of a Volga German, Catholic wife. She views Tamara as an ethnic Russian and Russian-Orthodox and a German Baptist with respect to the father. This results in conflicts between Tamara and Mathilda (BALLENTHIEN et al., 2007). [37]

The following statements made by Mathilda demonstrate this normative view of a purely Volga German, Catholic family. Mathilda comments on the time following the deportation:

"The boys used to be very handsome in the Northeastern German villages, but they were Baptists, and we are Catholic. There was always a fight because my grandma was strongly against that, she said every pig should stay in its hutch, because they have different beliefs, and we have this belief"²⁷ (I1/46/6-8). [38]

Her statements reveal that this idealized view with respect to family members and their identification with the Catholic religion can be traced back to the generation of her great-grandparents. In the following citation, Mathilda talks about her brother's marriage with an ethnic Russian woman:

"And then he got married to her, and that was a Russian girl ,my brother had' [...] she was still young, and he got married to her, and that one married the Russian girl, that one has, that he obviously had thought about"²⁸ (I1/16/29-34). [39]

26 In original language (German): "in dem Dorf also wo ich später dann auch gearbeitet und geheiratete habe also sozusagen Teil meine Wurzeln waren da (5) äh (2) jetzt hab ich den Faden verloren (8) mhm (1) hab ich den Faden verloren."

27 In original language (German): "die Jungs waren da sehr schön auf den plattdeutschen Dörfern aber das waren ja Baptiste, ja und wir sind katholisch ((I1 mhm)) ja da war ja immer ein Kampf bei uns weil meine Oma die war sehr dagegen die hat gesagt jedes Schwein muss bei seinem Trog bleibe weil die haben einen andren Glauben, wir haben so einen Glaube."

28 In original language (German): "und da hat er sich dann mit der verheirat und das war ein Russenmädchen 'mein Bruder hat' [...] die war noch jung und mit der hat er sich verheirat und

She refers to these persons as subjects, choosing words such as "that one married the Russian girl" and "he got married to that one" instead of "he," "she," "his wife," or their names. This reveals the contempt she feels towards her brother and his wife, which is most likely based on the ethnic belonging of the in-law wife. [40]

Let us return to Tamara. Maternally, she is an ethnic Russian and a Russian-Orthodox, and paternally, she is a Northeastern German Baptist. During the following years, she tries to come to terms with this situation by removing herself from potential conflicts. This can be evidenced by the fact that she leaves Mathilda to educate the children. In addition, she has her daughters baptized as Catholics. By pursuing this strategy, Tamara avoids the question of her own sense of belonging. Instead, she attempts to foster the fragile framework of her family ties and hopes to find a place within them. [41]

After several of her husband's family members and fellow villagers migrate to Germany, Tamara, her husband and other family members follow suit in the beginning of the 1990s. It is important to remember the context in which this decision was made. At the time, this generation's children had good prospects of becoming entirely assimilated into a society that was dominated by Russian culture. On the other hand, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the political transitions in Eastern Europe, Perestroika and Glasnost, and the collapse of the Soviet Union (DRUWE, 1991; BEISSINGER, 2002), this generation was also presented with the alternative of emigrating to Germany with their families, which would have involved a reclaiming of the German culture. According to the German Federal Expellee Law, issuance of a visa to Germany required evidence of one's German identity in the Soviet country of origin. Tamara and her husband also see themselves in a situation in which they have to reconsider their recent past and transform it in favor of German ethnicity. Together with her husband's other family members, they decide to depart to Germany. For Tamara this also means the final separation from her Northeastern German Baptist grandparents and her Russian-Orthodox relatives. On the other hand, her Volga German family ties provide consolation. [42]

In Germany, Tamara finds herself in a precarious situation: at first she experiences a loss of social status, followed by a financial downturn. Her living standards decline and her university degree is not recognized. As a result, she accepts employment for which she is overqualified. In addition to their economic woes, she begins to question her sense of belonging to the family and her husband's religion. With respect to prejudices and ascriptions she encounters in Germany, she and her relatives are being perceived as Russians, and not as Germans²⁹. [43]

das der jetzt das Russenmädchen hat geheiratet das hat man doch wohl auch, der hat er doch wohl auch sich überlegt."

29 In this context, the perception as Russians is not to be regarded with favor. Within public and the media discourses, "Being Russian" is often put on the same level with non-conformance and a high crime rate. The medial basis in this discourse is formed by crime statistics (KUSCHNER, 2000; OSTENDORF, 2007) and/or empirical research regarding drug consumption by emigrants (KRÜGER-POTZRATZ, 2003). It should be mentioned here that on

On the homefront, however, the conflicts of everyday life appear to get better. For the first time, Tamara, her husband and her two children no longer share a household with Mathilda. That gives her the opportunity to explore her role as a mother and to raise her children in accordance with her values. Her husband accepts a new job, and Tamara focuses on the education of her children until they move to another city after graduating from college. Now Tamara has the time and opportunity to think about herself. She starts to reanalyze her background, this time without the family pressure imposed upon her by Mathilda. The question of her feeling of belonging as an ethnic German becomes relevant with respect to the German majority culture: She is no longer forced to take on a subordinate role with respect to the Volga German part of her family anymore, and the decades of her childhood and adolescence gain in importance in her over-all biography. Thus, she primarily deals with her Northeastern German, Baptist past. The evaluation of her origins proves to be stressful biographical work (FISCHER-ROSENTHAL, 1995), which is related to numerous insecurities: As revealed in the quotation above, she is afraid of a direct confrontation with her construction of ethnic belonging at the start of the interview. Instead, she approaches the question of her belonging by addressing the question of her religious affiliation.

"That's the situation, when I say, which church do I belong to then, or, the end of my life when one lies in the casket, and in which chapel, which final prayer of which belief, that's not a topic today yet i hope, but for me it's like this ((I1: this bothers you)) (8) because one goes to the funeral (4) so to speak everybody belongs to a church (5) ,that is it' (5) , otherwise I am searching, I also have Russian icons"³⁰
(11/47/10-18). [44]

Tamara raises questions that she leaves unanswered. She says that she is searching. In other contexts she states: "but I am divided somehow"³¹ (11/49/5). The dilemma of her varied sense of belonging and, in reference to this subject, her insecurity, becomes manifest in this topic. Dealing with this question is of essential, even spiritual importance to her.

"My mother-in-law then sprinkled holy water over the body and made the sign of the cross and said a prayer, and suddenly, such a ball, such a bright one leaves the corpse and goes towards the window and disappears, and, uh, the wife of this uncle, she is also Baptist in this way, Baptists, they don't have water and don't make

February 28th, 2008, a conference of the advisory committee for issues regarding repatriates of German origin took place, addressing the crime rate of repatriates of German origin. The conference concluded that the criminal charges of repatriates is not higher that those of native Germans
(http://www.bmi.bund.de/cln_012/nn_1082274/Internet/Content/Nachrichten/Pressemitteilungen/2008/02/Beirat_Spaetaussiedlerfragen.html).

30 In original language (German): "das ist die Situation wo sag ich ja welcher Kirche gehöre ich dann, oder, das Ende des Lebens ja wenn man im Sarg liegt und in welcher Kapelle welches letzte Gebet von welcher Glaubensrichtung das ist heute, noch, nicht aktuell hoffe ich aber das is für mich so ((I1: beschäftigt Sie)) (8) weil das geht man zur Beerdigung (4) jeder gehört zu einer Kirche sozusagen (5) 'das is es' (5) 'und sonst bin ich auf der Suche ich habe auch russische Ikonen."

31 In original language (German): "aber irgendwie bin ich in diesem Spalt."

crosses, and the uncle was Catholic, and the mother-in-law, she is also of Catholic belief, and that's what we saw then [...] well that was quasi the soul, it left the body when the holy water was sprinkled over it"³² (1/47/38-48 & 48/1). [45]

Being Catholic, her mother-in-law Mathilda sprinkles holy water over the body which releases the soul. Like the wife of the deceased uncle, Tamara grew up a Baptist during her childhood and married a Catholic husband. However, only the "right" religion ultimately leads to the liberation of the soul and the "right" affiliation exempts from all uncertainties. For Tamara, this does not seem to be the Baptist religion of her grandparents. It is barely surprising that just the religion of the mother-in-law Mathilda, the person with the largest influence regarding family constellation, represents salvation in the manner quoted above. But at the time of the interview, it seems as if Tamara has not made a final decision yet. The antagonisms she experienced throughout her entire life have an emotional impact on her life today. The result is that she concludes her most important narration by crying, listing off the different religious affiliations of her family members, and the statement: "and I don't know where I belong, that is, I am religious, I pray (2) and that is also my problem (9)"³³ (1/14/45-46). [46]

3.3 Tamara (Jr.)—Shifting ethnic senses of belonging

Mathilda's granddaughter, Tamara Jr. was born in 1984 in Siberia near the Kazakh border to her father Martin and her mother Tamara. Tamara Jr.'s family history could not be more complex with respect to the differing ethnic and religious influences. Her father is a Volga German and a Catholic, both traits that are idealized among his family of origin. Her mother is the child of a Northeastern German, Baptist father and a Russian mother, who is a Russian-Orthodox. At the same time, she grows up in a Soviet society dominated by the Russian culture, in a village which is primarily inhabited by ethnic Germans. By reconstructing Tamara Jr.'s life story, we will demonstrate that even such a complex family history does not inevitably (re-)produce problems or crises. At the same time, this case reveals the shortcomings of static concepts pertaining to ethnic belonging and demonstrates the necessity of understanding the constellations of belonging in their genesis. [47]

The language spoken within the family is presumably German with a Volga German accent. The linguist Leo WEISGERBER (1967, p.35) argues that by learning the native language, the infant not only acquires the ability to express itself, but also adopts a native world view. When Tamara absorbs this world view, she is confronted with other conflicting world views at an early stage: The majority

32 In original language (German): "meine Schwiegermutter hat dann Weihwasser gespritzt und sich bekreuzigt und ein Gebet gesprochen und plötzlich geht von dem Leichnam so ein Ball so ein heller und geht Richtung Fenster und verschwindet und die äh Ehefrau von diesem Onkel die ist auch so in dieser Richtung Baptisten, Baptisten die haben kein Wasser und machen kein Kreuz, und der Onkel der war katholisch und die Schwiegermutter die ist auch katholischen Glaubens und das habe wir dann gesehen [...] also das war die Seele sozusagen die hat den Körper verlassen als das Weihwasser gespritzt wurde."

33 In original language (German): "und ich weiß nicht wo ich hingehöre, das ist, ich bin gläubig ich bete (2) das ist auch für mich das Problem (9)."

of the people surrounding her speak Russian. Consequently, she adopts a Russian viewpoint of the world in the course of her socialization during childhood. Every time she leaves her family household, she faces an entirely different reality. This reality is multiethnic; however, the Russian language dominates. While her autonomy increases, she becomes more familiar with this world. As a child she playfully learns to speak Russian, and switches back and forth between the Volga German³⁴ and the ethnic Russian realities without any problems. In her cognitive dimension³⁵, she exercises a situational ethnicity and never has to ultimately decide in favor of one reality, one lifestyle, or one language. She is a child, and if it was up to her, it could go on like this forever. Already in childhood, she is exposed to highly different ethnic belongings coexisting within her family due to the different family lines, and when her parents get married, there is a clash of these different belongings. It is easy for Tamara to position herself within the family since she has been socialized by them. The negotiations that take place between the family members she senses only latently. Similar to the other family members, she leans towards her grandmother Mathilda's Volga German affiliations since she has the strongest influence on the family structure at this time, and Tamara Jr. is receptive to her grandmother's care. Like her father, she can be loyal towards her mother at the same time because she is her daughter. The early mother-child relationship between Tamara and Tamara Jr. is not influenced by ethnic aspects in this family. All in all it can be assumed that Tamara developed a solid foundation from which she was able to adequately deal with more critical phases surrounding the question of ethnic belonging in her childhood and adolescence. [48]

Tamara Jr. hardly recognizes the seamless transition from one environment to another until she starts kindergarten. Here she encounters strong role pressures that she is required to adhere to. Presumably the children are urged to communicate in Russian amongst each other and with the kindergarten teachers due to the preschool mission statements of many villages, even those that almost exclusively consist of Germans, which, according to Peter ROSENBERG and Harald WEYDT (1992 p.229), represents an "authority of Russification." Kindergarten takes up the larger part of her day. She becomes aware of the formerly unconscious or at least insignificant differences. The two hitherto parallel spheres of life now compete with one another. During this time, Tamara's mother asks her to stop speaking "in this ugly language"³⁶ (11/14/24) with her, by which

34 We remember that although Tamara Jr. has a mother with northeastern German and ethnic Russian relatives, the Volga German part of the family has a stronger influence on the family constellation, thus on the children's education.

35 According to Richard JENKINS, ethnicity, as a component of culture and in situations in which it is produced and reproduced respectively, is as changeable as the culture or the situations (1997, p.13). Jonathan Y. OKAMURA with his concept of "situational ethnicity" also advances the thesis that the variety of affirmations regarding ethnic identities can depend on direct social situations and relates to the individual situational perception of the acting person (OKAMURA, 1981, p.452). The concept of "situational ethnicity" is based on the analyses made by Max GLUCKMAN (1940) and Edward E. EVANS-PRITCHARD (1937/1988) about the Zande of Sudan. The cognitive dimension of OKAMURA's situational ethnicity regards the subjective perception of situations by the acting individual; situations in which the acting person ascribes itself an ethnicity as a relevant factor in the overall situation (OKAMURA, 1981, pp.454-455).

36 In original language (German): "auf dieser hässlichen Sprache."

she means German. As in the ideal case discussed by OKAMURA³⁷, Tamara tries to escape this conflict by trying to convey her claim to both ethnic categories (OKAMURA, 1981, pp.454-455). Since the basic conditions within kindergarten are unchanging, she tries to work towards an alignment of the life spheres within her family. From now on her mother is supposed to talk to her in Russian, and German is considered to be an "ugly language" (11/14/24). Even if Tamara Jr. does not speak perfect Russian yet, she now learns it. At the same time the language acquisition can reduce the self-perception of ethnic differences within the kindergarten due to everyone's involvement in the same "language game" (ERIKSEN, 1991, p.131)³⁸. It is remarkable how Tamara Jr. tends to break out of the situational ethnicity and exerts influence on adjusting the two different spheres of life to each other. OKAMURA's concept falls short of this case. Here the limits of the concept of situational ethnicity come to the fore. A more process-related understanding of constructions of belonging is necessary (ROSENTHAL, 2004; FISCHER-ROSENTHAL, 1995)³⁹. At this point in her biography, due to the degree to which she has adapted to her environment, her advancement in the Soviet system may have been possible. As expected, Tamara Jr. does not mention anything about these years under the Soviet educational system during the interview because her Russian or rather Volga German past is not in line with her present-day views of self-presentation. Like her parental generation, the generation of grandchildren is in the situation of reshaping their Russian construction of belonging in favor of the belonging to a German ethnicity following emigration. [49]

Approaching the time of Tamara Jr.'s departure, there is an accumulation of remarks within the interview that present Germany as a magnificent dreamland:

"Here and there we were told such things as that there are these awesome toys in Germany, and that if you have a fancy cake and if you eat it then there's a Barbie doll inside of it, and the Barbie doll is as tall as yourself and they invented such things and told them and were crazy about it, it was somehow like a dreamland, wow, what might they have there and things like that"⁴⁰ (11/4/15-19). [50]

37 OKAMURA outlines an ideal case in which individuals claim their membership to a category, out of a limited range of ethnic categories they do or do not belong to. This happens accordant to their belief that such a selection of ethnic identities could be of use for them. This behavioral choice of the acting person is limited by role pressures to a great extent, which are caused by the basic conditions of social situations (OKAMURA, 1981, pp.454-455).

38 Thomas ERIKSEN tries to clarify the cultural context of ethnic differences. In his opinion, respective cultural differences are produced by, for instance, the close connection between language and thinking ("language game"). By means of his researches about intraethnic contexts in Trinidad and Mauritius he shows that ethnic differences are entirely arbitrary as soon as different groups are involved in the same "language game" (ERIKSEN, 1991, p.141).

39 Here the limits of OKAMURA's concept become visible. The genesis of ethnic constructions of belonging within the biography are unaccounted for in this concept. Instead of freedom of choice, it is imperative to give consideration to the interplay between the established ethnic or national constructions which are updated in crisis situations and which are connected to unprocessed and more distant social conflicts, and to newly emerging social constructions (ROSENTHAL, 2004). The biographical approach would make it possible to reconstruct potential changes within the individual power of defining and the active handling of inflicted ascriptions (p.219). There is a demand for a more process-related understanding of identities that considers the life-long process of socialization and self-alteration as well as the action-relevant conflict of the individual (FISCHER-ROSENTHAL, 1995).

40 In original language (German): "ja dann und da haben wir immer so Sachen erzählt bekommen dass es hier in Deutschland so tolles Spielzeug gibt und das man hier so ne Torte hat wenn

On the other hand, Siberia is presented as insanitary and racist—"auf ne andere Weise" (in a different way) (11/14/29). This polarization cannot have happened with such an intensity at that point of time. Tamara Jr. is integrated relatively well into her environment, she is happy, and at that point not aware of any bad hygienic conditions during her time in Siberia. Thus, elsewhere she engages in more detailed narrations about her childhood in Siberia which is more consistent with her past perspective. When asked questions during the interview, whether she could remember the time in Siberia well, she responds tentatively: "Oh yes, I would say that was the best time of my life, there is no better childhood that I could imagine"⁴¹ (11/12/14-15). Subsequently, Tamara remembers several very short narrations and situations which constitute a highly vivid picture of Tamara Jr.'s childhood. She gives an account of building little houses with trunks in the ground, clotheslines and mattresses. She tells how she sat in these self-made little houses with her friends, watched flashes of lightning and made sketches of them, and about her fear of the thunderstorm, and the horror stories about the equestrians that had been hit by lightning while tending cows. Furthermore she tells of playing in the corn field which incensed the neighbor. She remembers situations in which she walked down the roads with friends, dressed up as princesses. By analyzing the text passages mentioned above, especially with regard to the type of text, we can assume that the past was significantly altered. [51]

In spite of this, a slow process leading to a rather negative attitude towards Siberia might have started already before the migration. This process might have happened in the belief that the orientation towards a we-group of Germans would be of use in the future: With the knowledge of the upcoming emigration, the image of Germany which is conveyed to her through letters and pictures by schoolmates who had already migrated to Germany is idealized. Maybe at home Tamara also speaks German or Volga German more often. Furthermore, against the background of the imminent migration, her parents were openly indignant about the insufficiencies or disreputabilities of the Siberian administration⁴². The family automatically turns into a stronger reference point again since it is most likely to embody what will regulate life in the future. [52]

In the beginning of the 1990s, Tamara Jr. emigrates to Germany with her parents, her grandmother Mathilda and other family members. At the time of emigrating, Tamara Jr. is almost ten years old. Together with her parents she moves to a major North German city. [53]

After arriving in Germany, the family and all its members find themselves in a similar situation as in Siberia. In Siberia, their German ethnicity had made them outsiders⁴³ within Soviet society influenced by the Russian dominant culture. In Germany, being immigrants perceived as Russians makes them outsiders again

man sie aufisst dann ist drin so ne Barbiepuppe und die Barbiepuppe ist so groß wie du selbst und so voll die Sachen ausgedacht und erzählt und voll geschwärmt davon also das war irgendwie so das Traumland wow was gibt's da wohl und so."

41 In original language (German): "Oh ja, das war die beste Zeit meines Lebens würd ich mal sagen, also das is ne bessere Kindheit kann ich mir gar nicht vorstellen."

42 Evidence on that can be found in the interview with Tamara.

(see Footnote 28). In Germany Tamara comes to know entirely new conditions and role pressures. The initial feeling of adventure turns into a new reality which her ethnic construction of belonging has to embrace. All the smaller and bigger crisis situations of everyday life make up Tamara Jr.'s self-perception and the perception of others ascribed to her by the dominant German culture, and change her concept of ethnic belonging in a process-related way. [54]

Tamara Jr. has arrived at a point similar to her start in kindergarten. She finds herself in a situation which is even more critical than kindergarten: She does not understand the language spoken by her schoolmates and teachers. This can be explained by the limitation of her German language skills to the dialects of the parental generation (thus her grandparents) spoken within the family. High German is nearly incomprehensible to her. She is interloped into a situational ethnicity (OKAMURA, 1981, p.452) which, in regard to her everyday life at school, she cannot live up to at first. On the other hand, family life at this time does not differ a lot from family life in Siberia. Folklore festivities and rituals (e.g. Easter) are celebrated as they were in Siberia. Her parents keep her grounded. Since she is not able to talk to her classmates, the resource of an ideal home becomes even more important. She evaluates a brawl at school as follows:

"After the fight, my dad had, I returned home completely drained, the shirt was torn, and my parents oh my god what's wrong and then I first cried and my dad then started to show me some fight stunts how I can defend myself but not for beating, rather for defense, that eventually was helpful, I immediately felt safer"⁴⁴ (11/8/18-23). [55]

Her parents' devotion becomes apparent in further quotations during the interview. The coherence of her family is a resource that empowers her to work on her acceptance in school. It is about hard biographical work she has to cope with. For the second time in her life she tries to conform and to fulfill linguistic requirements in order to take part in the "language game" (ERIKSEN, 1991, p.141) of her everyday life at school. But even before she learns the language, she chooses a group cohesion that reveals her interests and motives: in everyday school life, she avoids the ethnic Russians and ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union of her class and chooses German classmates as friends. As at the beginning of her time in kindergarten, Tamara Jr. offensively adapts herself to the irreversible conditions of her everyday life outside of her parents' house. Now instead of "Russification" (ROSENBERG & WEYDT, 1992, p.229), becoming a German is her biographic plan. [56]

During the interview, Tamara Jr. talks more about concrete situations during the time period mentioned above than about her everyday life in Siberia in

43 As the term "we-group," the term "outsider" in this article is used according to Norbert ELIAS (and also John L. SCOTSON). For further annotations about the relation of the figuration between the established and outsiders see ELIAS and SCOTSON (1993, 1994).

44 In original language (German): "nach dieser Prügelei da hat mein Papa da bin ich total aufgelöst nach hause gekommen so T-Shirt zerrissen und meine Eltern oh mein Gott was ist los und dann hab ich erstmal rumgeheult und mein Papa hat dann mir angefangen irgendwelche Kampftricks zu zeigen wie ich mich wehren kann also jetzt nicht zum schlagen eher zum wehren, das war schon eine Hilfe da hab ich mich gleich so sicherer gefühlt."

kindergarten and at school. There is a simple reason for this: unlike the time in Siberia, the disclosure of this time period would not compromise her aim of presentation because the process in Germany which started after migration can be interpreted as ongoing, and the past didn't need to be reshaped until the point of emigration. In contrast to her situation in the Siberian kindergarten, Tamara Jr. does not find herself completely abandoned, but experiences the support of her parents. This time her parents are in the same situation, having to reconsider and modify their sense of belonging so that it is compatible in present day society. [57]

In the first few years, Tamara Jr. proves that her achievements of assimilation are more successful than those of her parents. Over the years the family members realize more and more their new "status as outsiders." Tamara Jr. however is in her late adolescence, hence in a biographic process of disengagement from her family, and thus is geared more intensely to new we-groups that are outside of her family system. Furthermore, as an unmarried young woman she can come to her own decisions and does not have to make family or group decisions. [58]

In this situation, just like during her time in Siberia, Tamara Jr. uses the strategy of turning towards one ethnic category to the disadvantage of the other. However, over the years her secure family background does not only provide a convenient foundation, but also carries the potential of conflict. This circumstance is revealed most articulately through a conflict with her parents concerning the right choice of a partner. Her attempt to present her parents with a boyfriend, who is also a foreigner with a different ethnic belonging, is rejected by them.

"And that I could wear a headscarf or something like that, and if I met somebody now, for example I met an Indian, he is Catholic, I told my parents about it and teased them a little bit about how about an Indian, and the kids would look so cute and, uh, they said no Tamara don't, and things like that"⁴⁵ (I1/28/11-15). [59]

Here Tamara Jr. tries to understand the ethnic limitations conceded to her by her family. Due to tight restraints with respect to this issue, she accepts the thought of finding a Volga German instead of a German partner. But so long as she does not find this partnership, her own ethnic belonging remains precarious. She can no longer define herself according to her family's ideals since her life has changed completely, especially since she has started to study in a different city. But a few years later, she rebuilds a stronger relationship to her parents once she has a boyfriend who is Volga German, but "Germanized"⁴⁶ (I1/28/6) as she describes it. On the one hand, she maintains a sense of belonging to Germany as a home, whereas on the other, she can follow in her family's footsteps by choosing a partner within their own ethnic community⁴⁷. [60]

45 In original language (German): "und dass ich da ein Kopftuch tragen könnte oder so und wenn ich jetzt jemanden kennen lerne, ich hab zum Beispiel einen Inder zum Beispiel kennen gelernt der ist katholisch hab meinen Eltern davon erzählt und die ein bisschen aufgezogen ja wie wärs mit einem Inder und die Kinder sehn doch bestimmt voll süß aus und ähm, ja, die so nein, Tamara nicht und so was."

46 In original language (German): "eingedeutsch[en]."

47 We want to remind here of the normative world view of her grandmother Mathilda.

Tamara Jr. spends her entire life in a family with a complex constellation of ethnic and religious affiliations and the resulting power relationships that are connected with them. Her socialization within this family structure, in conjunction with parental security and support, represents an important foundation for her life as an outsider first in a Russian dominated society and later in German society. She demonstrates an aptitude for assimilating and integrating her constructions of belonging in a process-oriented way without allowing such issues to develop into a crisis. [61]

4. Comparison of the Different Coping Strategies with Insecure Constructions of Belonging Applied by the Representatives of Three Different Generations

The result of the empirical analyses taken from interviews conducted with women of a German family from the former Soviet Union made it possible to draw conclusions about the generation-specific coping strategies of ethnic Germans with regard to their sense of belonging. It was also possible to demonstrate, that the ever changing constructions of belonging in each of the biographies were evident in all three cases. [62]

An analysis of the interview with Mathilda reveals how the events of deportation and the traumatic war years lead to an idealized memory and presentation of the past of the former Soviet settlement regions of the Volga Republic. Mathilda represents those ethnic Germans who for decades did not engage in life at the place of deportation, and merely functioned in everyday life by denying certain realities. Her own personal life was suppressed and defined through "substitute biographies." This process did not come to an end until she migrated. Mathilda had to come to terms with her fate because the conditions surrounding the emigration strongly resembled those of her deportation so that the past, which she successfully denied for years, was reactivated. We assume this empirical result can be generalized in so far as at the point of their departure to Germany, those ethnic Germans, who had denied their persecuted past, had the opportunity to reactivate the experiences of the war years and deportation in particular, and to reinterpret them in the context of their biographic experience. The biography of Mathilda, however, represents an ideal case scenario in which, for example, the train departure to migrate to Germany took place at the same train station where her deportation ended, the train station symbolizing the entryway and exit point to a new period in her life. [63]

For representatives of the parent generation who consisted of ethnic Germans, who had been deported from the Volga region to Siberia and Kazakhstan, constructions of belonging were restricted to the loyalty to and glorification of the German settlement region in the Soviet Union throughout their entire life. Germany is accepted by Mathilda as her new home, but still does not offer her a complete alternative to her original home in the Soviet settlement area. That is why her own children constitute stronger points of identification than her own biography. Similar as well as entirely different strategies in this generation can take root for Volga Germans, who like Mathilda concentrate on the present and

try to forget their past. This will have to be resolved by further case reconstructions. In Mathilda's life, this strategy is highly effective to such an extent that the issue of the construction of belonging takes a comparatively low significance in her life and is overlaid by the work of denial. [64]

As a representative of the child generation within the family analyzed by us, Tamara has to accomplish a substantial amount of biographical work in order to achieve a positively perceived feeling of belonging to a we-group. We can assume that members of this generation, who achieve educational advancement, learn the Russian language and to some extent have ethnic Russian partners and other ethnic Russian relatives, exhibit a high degree of "Russification" (ROSENBERG & WEYDT, 1992, p.229) and a high degree of identification with the Soviet system. The stronger this association is, the more difficult the emigration to Germany will be (FEFLER & RADENBACH, 2009/in press). If emigration takes place in spite of a high degree of integration within the Soviet Union—like in Tamara's case—, the process of reinterpretation will be more difficult and emotional. This dynamic is still worse if a social descent in Germany also takes place, which, as in Tamara's case, occurs relatively often. Hypothetically this increases the possibility of identifications with we-groups consisting of Volga Germans. In Tamara's case, however, this does not involve an all-inclusive identification with this we-group, but, on the contrary, involves the challenges of the complex, internal, ethnic and religious constellations within the family. Interlinked is also Tamara's search for her own position within this constellation through her religious affiliation. One characteristic of biographical work after emigrating is the identification with a religious we-group, as shown in Tamara's case. Just the same, Tamara's case also reveals that it is important to refrain from hastily formed hypotheses, and to consider case-specific characteristics by consequently reconstructing person's life stories. [65]

In comparison to the other two generations, the representatives of the generation of grandchildren are better positioned following emigration for identifying themselves with the German system and, on the basis of the cultural and linguistic specifications, of developing and maintaining a positively perceived feeling of belonging. This applies in particular to Tamara Jr., whose emigration takes place during adolescence. Due to her age it is easily possible for her to find we-groups outside the family. Consequently, she is able to let definitions by others in her peer group instead of her family take part in the construction of her belonging. For instance, she tries to find German friends and intentionally avoids ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union. In Tamara's case, her parents' house is an important resource for the integration into society and allows her to transform her constructions of belonging in an uncomplicated, process-related manner. Tamara Jr.'s construction of belonging is not discussed within the family until the moment, when she starts to look for a potential husband (BERGER & KELLNER, 1965, p.222). [66]

The individuals presented differ in the way they deal with the significance of emigration and the way it is incorporated into their own biographies. It has been made clear that different factors can have an impact on the construction of

belonging, like the conditions in the country of origin, a person's generation, the historic background and development of the previous and actual we-group and its relation (ELIAS, 1986) to the respective society. [67]

At the present time, the biographical work with persons from the former Soviet Union is still an underdeveloped subject of research and leaves open questions that deserve further examination. For the most part, multi-generational research, as presently conducted by ROSENTHAL, provides an insight into the effects that family histories and the social and historical context have on biographies. Furthermore, this method represents "[...] a more historical sociology, that is with a longer diachronic perspective and a less nomological methodology, and [also] more detailed 'thick-descriptive', empirical analysis" (ROSENTHAL, 2009b/in prep., p.1), as it is required in actual sociological discourses. [68]

Appendix

Cf. the following signs of transcription in ROSENTHAL (2005b, p.95):

,	= short interruption
(4)	= duration of the break in seconds
Ja:	= prolongation of a vowel
((lachend))	= comment by the transcribing person
/	= initiation of the commented phenomenon
nein	= emphasized
NEIN	= loud
Viel-	= abruption of a word or statement
'nein'	= quiet
()	= the content of the statement is incomprehensible; the length of the bracket relates to the duration of the statement
(sagt er)	= uncertain transcription
Ja=ja	= fast continuity
Ja so war	= coinstantaneous speaking from "so" on
Nein ich	

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